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1937

AN ACCOUNT of the two world conferences of the Christian Churches

By ALAN C. WATSON

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1937

An account of the two World Conferences of the Churches held at Oxford, July 12-26 and Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937

By

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CHAPTER ONE

Oxford and Edinburgh, 1937

Background

"Five Minutes to Twelve" is the arresting title of a new book by Dr. Adolf Keller of Geneva. This well-known Church leader has a unique knowledge of the political situation in Europe and of the strength and influence of the Churches of the world. In his judgment Western life is approaching a final stage in its crisis. There are "five minutes" to go. What can be done by the forces of unity, notably the Christian Churches, to prevent the break-up of civilisation?

This may or may not be a correct reading of the situation. No one, however, will deny that there are numerous facts to justify these apprehensions which are shared by many of the most acute observers of modern life. A generation ago men talked of "development" and "progress." There was a general feeling of optimism abroad. The world was getting better and better. Even the World War did not destroy these hopes of gradual and permanent improvement, as the birth of the League of Nations shows. Today the significant words of common speech are "conflict" and "tension." Instead of great ideas and ideals, there emerge powerful personalities who summon men and women to follow them with unquestioning obedience. All these are signs of a splitting up of the human family into fragments.

There are, in fact, two opposing movements at work. The first is towards Unity, the second towards disintegration. Physically the world is becoming one—its symbols are the airplane and radio. Whether they like it or not nations and races are being linked up to form one world-community. Against the background of physical unity we see the grim fact of cultural and spiritual disunity. This is seen in the rapid spread of Nationalism, the growth of the mutually hostile ideologies of Fascism and Communism, and the repudiation of the European tradition of liberty and the free pursuit of Truth.

Physically—drawing together; spiritually—breaking up. That is the world we live in. In the midst of this critical situation stands the Christian Church, itself divided, yet one in its common faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The question is, are the forces of unity strong enough to prevent the forces of disunity completing their work of destruction? Can the Christian Faith serve as a spiritual centre for the whole varied and tumultuous life of the world?

The problem began to make itself felt in the early part of this century. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 witnesses to that. Missionaries at work in non-Christian countries were beginning to realise that activity was hindered and results negatived by the disunity in the ranks of the Church. Since that date one world conference after another has strengthened the hope of greater unity, and several important unions have taken place. Notable have been the reunion of the two

branches of the Scottish Church, of the several streams of English Methodism, of the Churches in Canada, of several of the Congregational groups in U.S., and the South India scheme.

In the post-war period two movements within the non-Roman Churches have organised world conferences on a large scale. The movements are known as *Life and Work* and *Faith and Order*. Life and Work held its first conference at Stockholm in 1925; Faith and Order met at Lausanne in 1927. The first movement concerns itself with the activity of the Church and of individual Christians in the community and in the world. The second deals with the Church itself, its nature, faith, worship and organisation. At Stockholm in 1925 the Life and Work movement set up a secretariat and research bureau to work at Geneva. Dr. J. H. Oldham has been the director of this venture. This simple organisation has been the means of bringing together leading scholars, teachers and administrators of the Churches of Europe and America. Finally preparations were made for a second world conference. It was to be even more representative than Stockholm, and more thorough. The subject was to be "Church, Community and State" and the place of meeting, Oxford. Similarly the Faith and Order movement maintained a Continuation Committee, its secretary being Canon Leonard Hodgson of Winchester. A second conference was called for at Edinburgh, to meet a few days after the Life and Work conference at Oxford. "Oxford" and "Edinburgh" have already become short descriptions of these momentous gatherings of Church representatives, all of whom

received official appointment from their respective Churches. From New Zealand there went to Oxford Bishop West-Watson and the Rev. A. H. Acheson representing the Anglican communion, the Rev. L. A. North representing the Baptist and Methodist, Rev. Ian Borrie, Mr Alan Brash and myself representing the Presbyterian. The Bishop, Mr North and I were delegates; our colleagues were classified as "visitors" and "youth delegates." There were 425 delegates and 400 visitors and youth delegates. At Edinburgh the New Zealand representatives were the Bishop, Archdeacon Jermyn of Greymouth, Mr Borrie, Mr Brash and myself.

It is of these two conferences that I have been asked to write a short account by the Publications Committee of my Church in New Zealand.

CHAPTER TWO

The Oxford Conference, July 12-26, 1937

The Theme

The subject of the Conference was "Church, Community and State." Recent events in Austria, Poland, Spain, Russia and Germany have made it plain that there is no more practical problem before the Church. What is the true relation between Church and State? Should the Church seek to become a National Church? Has the Church a duty or a right to control the education of its young people? Is there any way in which the Church may promote lasting peace between the nations? These and related questions were dealt with at Oxford. They are not academic questions meant for quiet discussion in study and committee room. They are live issues which affect the life and happiness of millions of people. Professor Barker of London, a lay member of conference, described our subject as the profoundest in history—the question of the relation between the Church and the State-Community. The Church owns absolute allegiance to a supreme authority, God, and relative allegiance to the community.

The Scene

The bringing together of four hundred official delegates from practically every Church in the world, except the Church of Rome, for the purpose of seeking a common mind and united action is an enterprise without parallel in the history of Christianity.

Here is the scene in the Sheldonian theatre on the opening night. On the platform is one of the six chairmen, the Archbishop of Canterbury but lately engaged in the consecration of kingship at the Coronation. Supporting him are well-known leaders of Church and State throughout the world, both lay and clerical. I happened to sit next to T. Z. Koo of China, just arrived from his New Zealand tour and looking more youthful than ever. What fascination there was in watching the delegates enter the hall. This was indeed a reminder of the "many-coloured wisdom of God." White, yellow and black skins. Men in ordinary dress (like John R. Mott), clerics in flowing robes (they of the Orthodox Church), bishops and archbishops, pastors and ministers, professors, statesmen (like Viscount Cecil), economists (of the calibre of Sir Josiah Stamp), men and women. No one could fail to be inspired by that mixed gathering from the ends of the earth who stood to pray "in the name of Jesus Christ."

At this first meeting a tense and dramatic situation was created by the announcement that no delegates of the German Church (Lutheran) were present. A delegation had been chosen, arrangements were complete, and at the last moment passports were refused by the German Government. A solemn fact which threw into bold relief the realities which lay behind the conference. After prayer we responded to the soft Scottish voice of Professor John Baillie announcing the hymn "Ein feste Burg," delegates singing in English, French or German. An historic hymn with a new significance.

The Membership

The two absentee Churches were the Church of Rome and the German Evangelical (Lutheran) Church. Apart from these two exceptions the Conference represented world Christianity. There were citizens of forty countries; there was every type of Church from Roumanian Orthodox to American Baptist, from English Episcopal to Dutch Presbyterian, from Quaker to Old Catholic. Just glance at some of the men themselves. Timothy Lew, an eminent Chinese professor with Paul Nishida of Japan. Their national armies were even then preparing for that deadly war which still goes on. A group of Russians in exile from Paris and Warsaw, the long-haired bearded Bishop Seraphim (described by a light-hearted American as "the old fellow who has never escaped from the 8th century") and other representatives of the Orthodox Church, which is neither Roman nor Protestant. There were Drs. Lamont and Cockburn of the Church of Scotland, Dean Matthews, Canon Raven and the Archbishop of York of the Church of England. There were negro leaders from U.S.A. and Africa while India was prominent in the persons of Bishop Azariah of Dornakal and Principal Lucas, the lay Moderator of the united Church of South India. On the stage were the ecumenical leaders, J. H. Oldham, Adolf Keller, Visser 't Hooft and Henry van Dusen. From the U.S. were John Mackay and Sloane Coffin, Reinhold Niebuhr and Ross Stevenson. What variety of talent was represented by some of the others. Dr. Kraemar of Holland, A. D. Lindsay, master of Balliol, the Marquess of Lothian, Professor John

Macmurray, Dr. Nygren of Sweden, Otto Piper, a German exile, Charles Taft, a son of a former U.S. President, Dr. Thurneysen of Basle, Paul Tillich and Sir Alfred Zimmern.

Procedure

The delegates were grouped in five sections corresponding to the five divisions of the subject, *Church and Community, Church and State, The Church and the Economic Order, The Church and Education, The Universal Church and the World of Nations.* The main work was done in these sections. Each section produced a report, which, after further discussion and amendment was adopted by the full Conference. In addition there were open meetings in the Town Hall at which addresses were given by leading Christian thinkers, including such men as Oldham, Niebuhr, Emil Brunner, W. R. Matthews, T. S. Eliot, the poet-dramatist. The full reports are now available in printed form in the volume, "The Churches Survey Their Task." They merit the serious consideration of the Churches and of individual men and women. "What lends significance to the reports is that what they say is what a large body of Christians representing many different countries and different Christian traditions were prepared to say *together.*" (Oldham).

The reports do two things. They point at the places in the modern situation at which the Christian understanding of life is involved, and they define the right Christian attitude on these issues. All that I can do is to give a fragmentary account of what the reports contain.

Report 1—Church and Community

The foundations of community are shaken today. Traditional pieties, loyalties and standards of conduct have lost their authority. In many countries vigorous efforts are being made to restore social unity by setting up the welfare of nation or class as the supreme good. The Church must declare that disunity is the result of an attempt to organise life apart from God. The call to penitence is the first task of the Church.

Every Christian is born into a definite community to which he owes a primary service and loyalty. The Church should regard itself as the church for the whole people. To make the good of one's own country the supreme good, however, is sin. Similarly the existence of different races must be gladly acknowledged as God's way of fulfilling His purpose, and there must be no racial discrimination within the Church.

Report 2—Church and State

The State should be understood as an important form or order of human society which stands under the authority and the judgment of God. Through its monopoly of the means of coercion the State may become an instrument of evil. The State is not the ultimate source of law but rather is its guarantor. It is not the lord but the servant of justice.

The situation is different in different countries; what applies to Japan does not apply to Britain, and what is true of Sweden is not true of the United States. There is however an almost universal tendency for the State to control the totality of human

life, combined with the giving of absolute value to the state itself.

The Church's concern is to witness to men of the realities which outlast change. The State's concern is to provide men with justice, order and security. The Church has duties to the State of prayer, service, co-operation, criticism and influence. The State should provide the means of freedom for the Church which must renounce for ever the coercive power of the State in matters of religion.

Report 3—In Relation to the Economic Order

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is the supreme rule for Christians. A continuous interpretation of the law of love is demanded of the Church. It means the pursuit of justice and the creation of an ordered economic life which will provide opportunities for the full development of men as persons, body, mind and spirit. There is a double duty for Christians, to bear witness to their faith in the existing economic order, and also to test economic institutions in the light of God's will. The forces of evil are at work not only in the hearts of men but in the structure of society.

The Churches can offer a convincing example in the social and economic sphere only when they set their own house in order. There should be a unity between work and worship. Christians should bear witness to the faith in the daily practice of industry and commerce. The Christian must be prepared to take sides and participate in political and other forms of group action.

(This is a 40-page report and cannot be condensed. The detail should be read and pondered.)

Report 4—In Relation to Education

The Church must believe in education. She knows that no education is complete without the living encounter with God and the response of personal faith. Men must be taught to subordinate themselves to God as the supreme authority. While the Church in some parts of the world finds herself hampered by restraints upon her liberties, almost everywhere she is not making full use of the freedom accorded her.

There is need for a common mind on the nature of the Church's theology; there is also urgent need for a Christian philosophy of education. It is recognised that much of the direct educational activity carried on previously by the Church is now performed by the State. Where the Church still maintains schools of its own there should be a frank recognition of the unique character of those schools. The community has everything to gain from a variety of educational effort and from experiments.

The Church must see to it that her ministers are thoroughly equipped with Biblical and other theological knowledge and with such learning and skill as shall make them competent teachers, and partners of other teachers in the work of education.

Report 5—The Universal Church and the World of Nations

A special ground of faith and courage amid the perplexities of our age is that the Church is becoming truly ecumenical. It is important to distinguish between "international" and "ecumenical." The term "international" accepts the divisions of man-

kind into separate nations as a natural state of affairs. The term "ecumenical" refers to the actual unity of the Church. The one starts from the fact of division and the other from the fact of unity in Christ.

Wars and all situations which conceal the fact of conflict under the guise of outward peace are incidents in a world to which the Church is charged to proclaim the Gospel. War involves compulsory enmity, diabolical outrage against human personality, and a wanton distortion of the truth. There are three main positions which are sincerely and conscientiously held by Christians on War, and the Conference did not affirm any one of these positions to represent the only possible Christian attitude. In time of war as in time of peace the Church should pray not only for the nation in which God has placed it but also for the enemies of the nation.

A Significant Event

Much of the best preparatory work for the Conference was done by German (Lutheran) scholars, none of whom were allowed to come. Owing to their absence it was thought good that a Message be sent to the members of the great Evangelical Church of Germany which represents about forty million people. This was the text of the message:—

"The brethren in the Christian Churches assembled at Oxford to their brethren in the Evangelical Church in Germany.

"The representatives of Christian Churches, assembled at Oxford from all parts of the world, mourn the absence of their brethren in the German

Evangelical Church, with whom they have been bound in the preparations for this conference and in the great tasks which are set before the Universal Church.

"1. We welcome the fact that an agreement has been reached that a common delegation of the German Evangelical Church should be sent to Oxford. We therefore miss the more the great help which its members would have given to the fundamental issues of our time. But though your delegates are absent, the very circumstances of their absence have created a stronger sense of fellowship than before.

"2. We are greatly moved by the afflictions of many pastors and laymen who have stood firm from the first in the Confessional Church for the sovereignty of Christ and for the freedom of the Church to preach His Gospel.

"3. We note the gravity of the struggle in which not your Church alone but the Roman Catholic Church as well, is engaged, against distortion and suppression of Christian witness, and for the training of the young in a living faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God and King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

"4. We remember the words of the Scriptures: 'There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling'; 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it'; so we, your brethren in other churches, are one with our suffering brethren in the German Evangelical Church in love and prayer. Your Lord is our Lord, your faith is our faith, your baptism is our baptism. We are moved to a more living trust ourselves by your steadfast witness to Christ, and we pray that we

may be given grace in all our churches to bear the same clear witness to our Lord.

"5. We pray God to bless you and to guide and comfort you in your afflictions; and we call upon the churches throughout the world to make intercession for you with our Father in heaven and to rejoice that once again it has been proved that a faith born of sacrifice is counted worthy of sacrifice.

"Further that the conference approves of the sending of a delegation from Oxford to the German Evangelical Church to deliver this message and to inform the Church of the proceedings of the conference."

Although there were no State Church representatives present at Oxford, there were three "Free" Church delegates. One of them, Bishop Melle (Methodist) made a strong protest against this motion. He declared that Germany had been saved by a God-given leader, Adolf Hitler, that truly religious men were free to preach the Gospel, and that the resolution would aggravate the position of the State Church. I had conversation with one of the other German representatives and with his wife. They were most upset and concerned. At first they thought of leaving Oxford and returning to Germany. They felt their Leader (Hitler) was not understood. I have been given to understand that the three Free Church delegates would not have been given their passports unless they were considered "safe" men by the Government. However that may be, this one incident is sufficient to show that we were not dealing with a remote or academic issue. We were facing problems affecting the life and death

of the Christian Faith and the Church in the modern world.

Results

The first question most people ask about a conference of this nature is, "And what was achieved?" I doubt if any delegate went away with a feeling of failure. For many it surpassed expectations. There was a very large measure of agreement on large issues, an agreement that speaks hope for the future of the Church and the world. The united work of so many scholars, either in the reports or in the books prepared for the conference, will be of great assistance to Christian thought and action. It should have a profound effect upon the teaching ministry of the Church. There is also the effect of the conference on the lives of those who took part in it. For most, if not all, this event marks the beginning of a new endeavour; there is good reason for hoping that it represents a definite advance towards an effective Church unity.

CHAPTER THREE

The Edinburgh Conference, August 3-18, 1937

A few days after the close of the Oxford Conference a second gathering of Church representatives took place at Edinburgh. This was the *Second World Conference on Faith and Order*. At Oxford we thought and talked about the work of the Church in this confused and tangled world. At Edinburgh we thought and talked about the Church itself, especially against the background of our most unhappy divisions.

The Scene

On the morning of August 3rd, the most cosmopolitan congregation ever assembled in St. Giles' Cathedral met to worship God in the Name of Jesus Christ, His Son. There were four hundred delegates chosen from nearly every Church in Christendom. Orthodox bishops sat beside English Quakers; Lutherans shared hymn sheets with Assyrians; from every continent they came, seeking new ways of unity through common worship. Thus began the second Conference on *Faith and Order*.

The service was conducted by a Presbyterian (Dr. Charles Warr), the sermon was preached by an Anglican (the Archbishop of York), the Old Testament lesson was read by a Greek bishop (Germanos), the New Testament lesson by a Lutheran from the Church of Sweden (Brilioth), and the benediction was pronounced by the Moderator of the

Church of Scotland, who had flown by air from the Outer Isles to be present at this momentous gathering.

I sat in the south transept near the pulpit. Not far away was John Knox's pulpit. I think he would have rejoiced at the presence of that great and mixed congregation within St. Giles', although there are others whose names are associated with the Cathedral who might not have been so enthusiastic! A surpliced Archbishop of York in the pulpit of this stronghold of the Presbyterian Church—well, we are getting on!

The service began with the Old Hundredth, sung in the three languages, English, French and German. I cannot recall a more impressive or significant act of worship than the singing of

> All people that on earth do dwell
> Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice

moving forward in stately time to the great climax

> His truth at all times firmly stood,
> And shall from age to age endure.

In his sermon Dr. Temple reminded us that although the purpose of our meeting was to consider the causes of divisions between the Churches, yet what made our meeting possible at all was our essential unity. The Church is one. Our urgent need is to find adequate means of expressing that unity. "I speak as a member of one of those churches which still maintain barriers against completeness of union at the Table of our Lord. I believe from my heart that we of that tradition are trustees for an element of truth concerning the nature of the church which

requires that exclusiveness as a consequence, until this element of truth be incorporated with others into a fuller and worthier conception of the Church than any of us hold to-day. I know that our division at this point is the greatest of all scandals in the face of the world. It should be horrible to us to speak or think of any fellow-Christians as not in communion with us."

Preparation

Those who have read the reports of the first conference at Lausanne in 1927, or have followed the subsequent development of the Faith and Order Movement are aware of the immense amount of work which has been done by leading thinkers in Europe and America. The result of their co-operative labours led the Continuation Committee of the movement to present four printed reports for the consideration of delegates to Edinburgh. These reports were based upon much larger documents, which are the joint product of theological commissions, and cover most of the matters that are fundamental to Christian belief and Church organisation. Several of these longer documents have already appeared in book form as "The Doctrine of Grace," "The Ministry and the Sacraments" and "Ten years' Objective Progress in Church Unity."

The Reports

The titles and contents of the reports may be briefly indicated:—

1. *"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."* The meaning of grace, justification and sanctification;

the relation of grace Word and Sacraments; a statement on the meaning of "Sola gratia."

2. *"The Church of Christ and the Word of God."* Here the concept "Word" is examined; there is an examination of Holy Scripture and its relation to Scripture, and the relation of the Church to all three, that is, to Word, Scripture and Tradition.

3. *"The Ministry and Sacraments."* The nature of the sacraments is explained, while longer statements are made concerning their number, authority and validity. There is a full statement on Baptism and Holy Communion. The divergencies regarding the ministry are recorded, and an attempt is made to envisage a ministry for the whole Church.

4. *"The Church's Unity in Life and Worship."* This is by far the longest report, and will be of great practical service to those who have influence upon or responsibility for church work and worship generally. Included in the long list of important subjects are inter-communion, common worship, unions of churches, ministerial training for the conduct of worship and so on.

Procedure

The delegates were grouped in four sections. Each section was given its own report to deal with as it thought best. The first week was devoted to a full discussion, in committee, of these reports. In each case radically amended and revised reports were presented to the whole conference in printed form. There they were discussed and debated all over again. Next they were redrafted and came again before the whole conference. They were finally received and unanimously adopted on the 16th

day of our meeting. In due course these final reports will be sent down to the churches for their consideration. I doubt if the method of procedure could be bettered. The conference was guided by wise and experienced leaders, who, over many years, have learned the technique of conducting business in three languages.

An Example of How We Worked

At my own request I was placed in Section 3 which had to face the exceedingly difficult and delicate subject, "Ministry and Sacraments." There were more than one hundred members in this section, so we divided into three sub-sections. My sub-section dealt with the single question in the report, "what is a sacrament?" For more than a week we spent long hours in study, discussion and drafting. Concerning the Sacraments a large measure of agreement was discovered, and the final report will probably come as a surprise to some people. It was agreed that the Churches base their sacramental doctrine upon the New Testament and that Baptism and the Lord's Supper occupied from the beginning a central position in the life of the Church. There was general agreement also on the nature of the Sacraments, but on the question of their number there was real divergence. The Orthodox, with some Lutherans and Anglicans, hold that there are seven sacraments; the Orthodox go further with their assertion that the Sacrament of Orders is primary and gives validity to the others. And yet concerning this difficult word "validity" many will be glad to read this statement in our report: "Many of us are of opinion and desire to record our belief that,

although it is the duty of a Church to secure that sacraments should be performed regularly and canonically, yet no judgment should be pronounced by any Church denying the 'validity' of the sacraments performed by any Christian Church which believes itself to be observing what Christ appointed for His Church."

Points of Interest

Not much progress was made in connection with the nature of the Ministry. Anyone who is acquainted with the causes of our divisions knows well enough that the fundamental cause is the unwillingness of episcopal churches to recognise the ordination of ministers by any but a bishop. Yet there is a refusal to admit defeat. "In a united Church the intimate association of the presbyters in council with the bishop, and of the laity with both, in the government of the Church, should be conserved and restored. Thus the Espicopate would be both constitutional and representative of the whole Church."

It became more and more apparent that what divides the Churches is not "Faith" but "Order." That is to say, when Christians attempt to say *together* what they mean by the Gospel or Christianity, they discover that they all mean the same thing and believe the same things. This is made plain by the Affirmation of Faith, which was adopted without dissent by the whole conference at its concluding session, and also in Report 1 where it is stated that the Conference *"can find no ground for maintaining the divisions between the churches."* This discovery and the statement of it is one of the most encouraging features of Edinburgh, 1937.

Nothing like this has been said since the 16th century by so responsible a body of Christian men. On the question of "Order," however, there are still real divisions which are likely to continue for a long time to come. When one group maintains that there are seven sacraments and the other group that there are but two sacraments of the New Testament, it is difficult to see how real unity can be achieved. Again, when some make the so-called "historic episcopate" a ground for reunion there is aroused a resoluteness among Presbyterian (Reformed) brethren which rebukes the easy optimism of those who say "our differences do not matter." I think that it will be necessary during the next ten years to have full discussions on the Nature of the Church, and this is likely to be the main subject for the 1947 Conference.

Results

Those best qualified to judge have expressed satisfaction with the immediate results of the Conference. The four reports may be regarded as giving a truly reliable presentation of the beliefs of the Churches of the world. "The progress made since Lausanne is astonishing," declared Dr. Temple in a broadcast talk. "There is a complete change of atmosphere. At Lausanne there was complete personal friendliness, but the delegates were on the defensive. Each group was concerned to maintain its own tradition intact and there was a good deal of impatience with those whose traditions were furtherest from each other. That is now altered. There is mutual respect all round. We all know that

if we have something to teach our neighbours we have also something to learn from them."

At Lausanne the delegates stated what their several churches believed; at Edinburgh, ten years later, the delegates were able to declare what the *Church* believes. There is a profound difference.

Some of the Delegates

Outstanding was the president of the conference, the Archbishop of York. ("If we have to choose a Pope for a united Church let it be Billy Temple," declared an enthusiastic American!) At the opening meeting in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall the vice-president, Dr. A. E. Garvie, the veteran Congregational scholar, referred to Dr. Temple as "a master of assembles." That he proved himself to be. He has a splendid voice and a conciliatory manner, and he inspired confidence in his wisdom and fairness.

Perhaps the most striking and picturesque personality was Father Florovsky, professor of Patristics at the Russian Institute in Paris. He speaks good English, and acted as chairman of a subsection on the Ministry. Imagine a Russian presiding over a meeting which included Southern (U.S.A.) Baptists, English Congregationalists and Scottish Presbyterians, and stretch your imagination still further by thinking of their subject—the Christian Ministry! Father Florovsky has a good knowledge of the Orthodox position; he insists on the use of exact and carefully thought-out theological statements. He is a thorough scholastic. He made one very good suggestion, namely, that a group

of church historians from different communions should make an exhaustive study of the origins of the Christian Ministry.

One of the surprising yet illuminating features of the discussions was the effect caused by the speeches of Quaker delegates. They were excellently represented by such men as E. Hayman, Carl Heath and H. G. Wood. Their addresses had a subduing effect upon even the most zealous High Churchmen and most ardent sacramentalist. In private conversation one Anglican said to me, "these Catholics almost persuade me to be a Quaker."

No international church conference is complete without Dr. Adolf Keller. I met him first at Oxford and found him to be as interesting and informative as his books. He is full of life and energy, has hosts of friends, and is a very sound Presbyterian of the Swiss type. Another Calvinist who impressed me very much was Principal Whale, of Cambridge, a Congregational leader. He is small and youthful looking; has a very clear mind and a charming manner. Among the Methodists none impressed me more than Professor Ryder Smith. Among the Anglicans two who stood out were Dr. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, and Canon Quick, of Durham. Both are first-class scholars. The Bishop has taken a leading part in the work of the movement, and brings to its deliberations great learning. He is now an old man, but is still alert in mind and spirit, and is always listened to with profound respect.

Among others who will always be remembered are: Bishop Aulen, of Sweden, the author of an important book of the Atonement; Professor C. H.

Dodd, the Nonconformist professor of New Testament at Cambridge; and Professor Alivisatos, of the University of Athens.

Conclusion

No one could attend the Edinburgh Conference without being profoundly stirred by the mere spectacle of such an assembly of men of every diversity of complexion and of attire so many of them bearing insignia of rank which spoke of the most ancient traditions. This diversity was not merely external. It suggested that which is deeper and inward. Any fractional apprehension of our Lord, however true it may be, involves some measure of impoverishment of the Church. It is only with *all the saints* that we can hope ever to comprehend the length and the breadth and the depth and the height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

CHAPTER FOUR

An Affirmation of Unity

At the final session of the Conference at Edinburgh we met for the last time in the Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland. The President, the Archbishop of York, was in the chair, the chair usually occupied by the Moderator of the Scottish Church. Over his head was a stained glass window with the familiar symbol of our Presbyterian Churches—the Burning Bush, and the words *Nec Tamen Consumebatur.* The Chairman asked us all to stand, so marking our assent as representing our own churches, to the Affirmation of Unity. Here are the words of the declaration:—

Affirmation of union in allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ adopted by the Conference by a standing vote on August 18th, 1937, *nemine contradicente.*

The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, held in Edinburgh in August, 1937, brought together four hundred and fourteen delegates from one hundred and twenty-two Christian communions in forty-three different countries. The delegates assembled to discuss together the causes that keep Christian communions apart, and the things that unite them in Christian fellowship. The Conference approved the following statement *nemine contradicente:*—

We are one in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. We are one in allegiance to Him as Head of the Church, and as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are one in acknow-

ledging that this allegiance takes precedence of any other allegiance that may make claims upon us.

This unity does not consist in the agreement of our minds or the consent of our wills. It is founded in Jesus Christ Himself, Who lived, died, and rose again to bring us to the Father, and Who through the Holy Spirit dwells in His Church. We are one because we are all the objects of the love and grace of God, and called by Him to witness in all the world to His glorious Gospel.

Our unity is of heart and spirit. We are divided in the outward forms of our life in Christ, because we understand differently His will for His Church. We believe, however, that a deeper understanding will lead us towards a united apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus.

We humbly acknowledge that our divisions are contrary to the will of Christ, and we pray God in His mercy to shorten the days of our separation and to guide us by His Spirit into fulness of unity.

We are thankful that during recent years we have been drawn together; prejudices have been overcome, misunderstandings removed, and real, if limited, progress has been made towards our goal of a common mind.

In this Conference we may gratefully claim that the Spirit of God has made us willing to learn from one another, and has given as a fuller vision of the truth and enriched our spiritual experience.

We have lifted up our hearts together in prayer; we have sung the same hymns; together we have read the same Holy Scriptures. We recognise in one another, across the barriers of our separation, a

common Christian outlook and a common standard of values. We are therefore assured of a unity deeper than our divisions.

We are convinced that our unity of spirit and aim must be embodied in a way that will make it manifest to the world, though we do not yet clearly see what outward form it should take.

We believe that every sincere attempt to co-operate in the concerns of the Kingdom of God draws the severed communions together in increased mutual understanding and goodwill. We call upon our fellow-Christians of all communions to practise such co-operation; to consider patiently occasions of disunion that they may be overcome; to be ready to learn from those who differ from them; to seek to remove those obstacles to the furtherance of the Gospel in the non-Christian world which arise from our divisions; and constantly to pray for that unity which we believe to be our Lord's will for His Church.

We desire also to declare to all men everywhere our assurance that Christ is the one hope of unity for the world in face of the distractions and dissensions of this present time. We know that our witness is weakened by our divisions. Yet we are one in Christ and in the fellowship of His Spirit. We pray that everywhere, in a world divided and perplexed, men may turn to Jesus Christ our Lord, Who makes us one in spite of our divisions; that He may bind in one those who by many worldly claims are set at variance; and that the world may at last find peace and unity in Him; to Whom be glory for ever.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflections

Some time has elapsed since the meeting of the two conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh. Already there has been a number of books on the subject of the Ecumenical Movement represented there. I have read what other delegates have written, and have re-read my own first observations. It may now interest readers to follow me in a short concluding chapter of reflections.

It seems to me that there is a great deal more unity among the Churches than we sometimes think. The 1937 conferences have helped many people to recognise this fact. "We could not seek union if we did not already possess unity," said the Archbishop of York. It would be foolish to minimise the difficulties, to shut our eyes to the very important differences between the Churches. Personally I cannot see any way in which Episcopacy and Presbytery may effectively unite, although that very wise man, the Bishop of Gloucester thinks he can. He said so in a courageous sermon he preached in a Presbyterian pulpit in Edinburgh. I like these words of Principal J. S. Whale, "The difficulties are gigantic; it is quite useless to belittle this fact; but it is a good sign that we seem to be getting beyond the polite fear of hurting one another's feelings." That I know is true. I heard things said in committee in Edinburgh which, if said in public in New Zealand, would create an ecclesiastical controversy of a most violent type. We do possess unity.

At Oxford, Professor van Dusen said that America was a good training ground for the "ecumenical mind," because there one had to work alongside Christians whose ways of worship and theology were a daily scandal! So, while we are getting away from the polite fear of hurting one another's feelings, we are also getting over the habit of being shocked by the weak (or High) Churchmanship, the slipshod (or too formal) worship, the soft (or hard) theology, of our fellow-Christians who belong to other branches of the Holy Catholic Church. I have already referred to the remark of a bright American that a certain Orthodox bishop "had never escaped from the 8th century." On the other hand a sedate Continental scholar was heard to say, "that young American thinks that wisdom can be assembled in 24 hours like a Ford car." The Old World tends to stress the importance of continuities, the New World deals with contingencies. But we are all the poorer for the lack of what the others have. There are rich treasuries possessed by each Christian communion. We impoverish ourselves by acting as though there were but one.

It is becoming evident that the Church is seeking to understand its own nature and function.

"The life of Christians must become more church-centred than it has been. One of the great facts that Protestant Christianity has forgotten is that the unit in the New Testament is the Church and not the isolated Christian. We need a high doctrine of the Church, not in an ecclesiastical but in a spiritual sense. This must begin in the theological seminary." This is a statement by Dr. John A. Mac-

kay, President of Princeton Seminary, U.S.A. It is significant that this important and progressive theological institution has established a Chair of Ecumenics, and Dr. Mackay himself is the first occupant. We need the same spirit in our denominational life and work, and in our contacts as congregations with other congregations in the same city or town.

One effect of the conferences should be, as Rev. Hugh Martin says in his excellent little book on Edinburgh, to give the Church "a determination to act upon the unity we already have. Talk about unity that is not accompanied by action is dangerous. There is always a temptation to feel that if one has shared in passing a resolution something has been done. That is seldom true, the business of unity has to be made local. It must lead to closer co-operation, nationally, and even more important, in town and village. We shall never learn the way to a larger unity until we act upon the unity we already have."

"Oh, we'll never agree. So what's the use of all this talk about unity?" How often one hears remarks like that. To anyone who has even a slight understanding of the present world situation and of the nature of the Christian Gospel such an attitude of bland fatalism is impossible. We refuse to believe that what keeps Christians apart are everlasting obstacles. We may not be able to see how the union of Christendom can be brought about, but as Christians we must surely desire it. "Well, if it does come, it won't be in our time," is the next remark, and sometimes it is accompanied by a sigh of resigna-

tion. Is not this thought of "moving slowly" the thought of tired men, of lazy men? I am convinced that our chief need as individual Christians is not to be shown the means to unity or the way, but the *will to unity*. "We believe," says the Edinburgh Report, "that the divisions of Christendom in every land are such as to hamper the manifestation of the unity of Christ's Body. We deplore this with all our hearts, and we desire the Conference to summon members of the Churches to such penitence that not only their leaders, but the ordinary men and women who hear their message, may learn that the causes of Christian unity is implicit in God's Word, and should be treated by the Christian conscience as an urgent call from God."

A List of Books

(N.Z. Prices are quoted)

The Life and Work Movement (Oxford)

The Churches Survey Their Task, edited by Dr. J. H. Oldham. This is the official report of the Oxford Conference. It contains a long introduction by the editor, the five sectional reports, etc., and a complete list of churches represented with a further list of the delegates. Price 8/-.

World Chaos or World Christianity, by H. S. Leiper, who is the Secretary of the American section of the Movement. This is a popular interpretation by a competent American. Price 10/6.

Five Minutes to Twelve, by Adolf Keller. A personal interpretation from the pen of this interesting man. Price 7/6.

The Church and Its Function in Society, by Oldham and Visser 't Hooft. One of the volumes prepared for the use of delegates. An excellent survey. Price 13/6.

Christian Faith and the Modern State, by Nils Ehrenstrom. An excellent statement of the teaching of all the churches concerning the relation between Church and State. Price 7/6.

In addition there are six books written by six groups of scholars. These were used as the basis for sectional discussion. They cover the whole field of the subject "Church, Community and State," and their titles are:—

The Christian Understanding of Man.

The Kingdom of God and History.
The Christian Faith and the Common Life.
Church and Community
Church, Community and State in Relation to Education.
The Universal Church and the World of Nations.

These volumes may be indented at 9/6 a volume or for 37/6 the set.

The Faith and Order Movement (Edinburgh)

The Report. Copies can be obtained, free, from the Secretary, Cheyney Court, Winchester. 52 pages.

Convictions. The Churches reply to the report of the first Conference at Lausanne in 1927. Price 10/6.

The Doctrine of Grace. By a group of writers. Edited by W. T. Whitley. Price 18/6.

The Ministry and the Sacraments, being the special report of a theological Commission appointed to prepare material for the conference. Price 22/-.

A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, by H. Paul Douglass. A very interesting and encouraging book. Price 10/6.

Edinburgh, 1937, by Hugh Martin. A 100-page account of the Conference. Very well done. Price 2/9.

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